

31. October 2023

The creation is waiting for the children of God to be revealed

Rom 8:18-25

In my estimation, all that we suffer in the present time is nothing in comparison with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us, for the whole creation is waiting with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed. It was not for its own purposes that creation had frustration imposed on it, but for the purposes of him who imposed it- with the intention that the whole creation itself might be freed from its slavery to corruption and brought into the same glorious freedom as the children of God. We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains. And not only that: we too, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we are groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness for our bodies to be set free. In hope, we already have salvation; in hope, not visibly present, or we should not be hoping - nobody goes on hoping for something which is already visible. But having this hope for what we cannot yet see, we are able to wait for it with persevering confidence.

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So speaks the apostle Paul, who gives us a glimpse of the tremendous sufferings he endured for the sake of the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:24-29). Most Christians will probably not experience such suffering, but this statement of his is a very significant indication for us who are to be people of hope. The sufferings of this time, as difficult as they are, must not crush us, discourage us or rob us of hope. If this happens, it is perhaps a sign that our soul is not sufficiently vigilant and is too absorbed in suffering. The devil, for his part, can make a difficult situation of suffering look even darker.

In such circumstances, it will help us to remember the words of the Apostle, which will give us hope and lift our eyes: there is a glory beyond compare waiting for us, and then we will be able to say: "Lord, how small were the sufferings you endured with us in comparison with the glory we are about to experience". Saying this now, in faith and hope, will help us not to despair in the face of suffering, to lift our eyes to God and to "wait with patience".

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What does this mean?

We human beings are liberated from the slavery and bondage of sin by our Lord. This process involves the whole of creation, which has been entrusted to us to have dominion over it (cf. Gn 1:28). The more the mystery of redemption penetrates us, the more careful we will be in our treatment of the creation entrusted to us. We can learn this attitude from the Lord Himself, since we are His creation, which He has made His children. How well the Lord treats us! And it is precisely this way of treating us that we must imitate, first of all in relation to other human beings, but also in relation to the irrational creation whose various elements St Francis calls his brothers in the famous "Canticle of the Creatures".

But here it is important to make a clear distinction: Humankind should help creation to reach its highest destiny according to God's plan and treat it as the Lord has intended. In pagan cults, on the other hand, human beings, lacking a true knowledge of God, deify creation. Therefore, however sensitive we may be to the dignity of creation, which is the work of God's hands, there can be no question of paying special homage to creation or to certain symbols that represent it (e.g. the "Pachamama"). This would be idolatry, which offends the dignity of both God and man.

In our Catholic Church, care must be taken not to make room for pagan elements - whether taken from indigenous peoples, other religions or esoteric ideas - under the concept of "inculturation". These would overshadow the liturgy and the doctrine of our Church! The painful memory of the disgraceful spectacle of the Pachamama cult that took place in the Vatican Gardens and St Peter's Basilica a few years ago is still fresh in our minds.

It is commendable that efforts are being made to be more respectful and sensitive to creation. Sensible measures concerning the environment and available resources are also welcome and often necessary. But all this must not lead to an ideological and quasi-religious attitude that could degenerate into a substitute for religion.

Let us put our hope in the Lord in everything, and then we will have found the direction in which to move!